

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6-9, and 12 are currently pending, wherein claims 1 and 7 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of canceled claims 5 and 11 respectfully. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the remarks presented herein below.

At the outset, Applicants note the indication on page 3 of the Office action ("Action"), that claims 5 and 11 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowed if rewritten in independent from including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Although Applicants disagree with the Examiner rejection(s) of claims 1-4, 6-10, and 12, in order to expedite allowance of the present application, independent claims 1 and 7 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claims 5 and 11, respectively. Accordingly, the presently pending claims are allowable.


In paragraph 1 of the Action, the Examiner rejects claims 1-4, 6-10, and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over European Publication No. EP 1328114 to Allizon et al. ("Allizon"), in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,097,757 to Boice et al. ("Boice"). As discussed above, independent claims 1 and 7 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claims 5 and 11, respectively, thereby rendering this rejection moot.

The application is in condition for allowance. Notice of same is earnestly solicited. Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Penny Caudle Reg. No. 46,607 at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Director is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge any fees required during the pendency of the above-identified application or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448.

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Respectfully submitted,

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